

NAMES OF TOWNS IN THE UNITED STATES.

NUMBER ONE.

OUR countrymen have claimed for themselves an inventive genius superior to that of any other people. This may be true, so far as the mechanical arts are concerned; but when the imagination has been exercised in the invention of words, by which to designate the numerous cities, towns, villages, and rivers of our country, it is evident that there is a great deficiency of originality, as well as good taste.

The writer of these pages was accidentally led to notice this subject, while making some statistical researches, during the winter of 1835 and '36. The frequent occurrence of the same names in almost every state in the Union, was the cause of much perplexity, and induced him to examine the subject at length. This examination resulted in the following analysis of American names.

The people of ancient as well as of modern times designated their cities, towns, etc., by names peculiar to themselves. Every nation had a class of names as distinct as its language. These were seldom borrowed by others, as foreigners could not understand the meaning which was intended to be conveyed by them among the people with whom they originated. These names indicated the particular object for which the towns or cities that bore them were built, or to whose munificence they owed their origin and prosperity, if fortune had favored them with the latter. In other cases, they obtained their appellations from the peculiarities of their situation, or from the avocations of their inhabitants. The names of mountains, rivers, and other geographical divisions, were alike indicative of their situation.

The cities of ancient Egypt bore names which at once made known to what god or goddess they owed their protection, or whose fanes of devotion they had the honor and exclusive privilege of containing. The Hebrew names of cities, mountains, rivers, etc., were, in some way, connected with their history or location, or with the religious opinions of the particular tribes which inhabited them.

Greek and Roman appellations, also, originated from similar sources, or were more or less connected in their origin, with their mythology. Asiatic names, particularly those of Hindostan, indicate by their termination whether they designate a district, a city, a town, or a village; whether it is fortified; whether in a morass, on a hill, and other peculiarities in its situation. The origin of these may, perhaps, be attributed to the copiousness of the languages from which they are derived, as in them much may be expressed by a single word or termination. Many East Indian names can be traced to the Sanscrit language, in which their true meaning may be found. The same remarks will apply to other places in Asia, the original names of which are formed in its primitive languages.

European names also contain significant meanings in the languages of her aboriginal inhabitants, when they owe their origin to them; and although in their terminations they have been altered to suit the peculiar dialects of the people by whom they are now employed, are not unfrequently the medium through which may be

traced the character of the people who originally gave name to, and inhabited, the particular regions of country in question.

England, which was colonized by Normans, Danes, Saxons, Romans, etc., retains the names given by the descendants of these to the several parts occupied by them. The course pursued by the Teutonic, Gothic, and Celtic nations, from which sprang the present people of Europe, can be traced as well by the names they respectively gave to the countries through which they passed in their migrations, as by the more usual method of tracing the affinities of languages, or by an etymological analysis.

These remarks are made, to show how closely the names of places are identified with the history of the countries in which they are found. This is very far from being the case in our own country. How many names are there in the United States, which are employed to designate our numerous cities and towns, that convey a meaning expressive of any peculiarity connected with their situation or history? And how few there are, in proportion to the great number, derived from the aboriginal inhabitants!

It would seem that the first settlers of the Union were not satisfied with exterminating the lawful possessors of the soil, but in order that their memory might die with them, they altered the names which the aborigines gave to their country, and which were always expressive, for others, borrowed from foreign countries, wholly inapplicable to designate them. The Indian names were well calculated to perpetuate the memory of the several tribes, beside being more melodious in sound than the English ones. The copiousness of their languages, and the method of compounding words, enabled the Indian nations to express in a single word what we could only do in a dozen.

Who will deny that the ancient name of the island of New-York, *Manhattan*, is not more beautiful than that by which it is now known? Beside, it is a lasting monument of an event which must forever remain a foul blot upon the first Dutch navigators who landed on the island — an event but a prelude of what was to follow, and which, even at the present moment, is occurring in our western borders, as the march of the whites encroach upon the soil of the aborigines. *Manhattan* is derived from the Indian word *Manahactaniend*, which means ‘*The island where we all became intoxicated.*’* Comment is unnecessary.

Nine only of our states have Indian names; the remainder are English or French. Our rivers have more generally retained the names by which they were known to the aborigines; but a city or town with an appellation of that character is extremely rare. In the eastern states, aboriginal names are more frequent than in other parts of the Union; but they merely designate small sections of country, where there were formerly Indian settlements, and have only been preserved by those in the immediate vicinity. Handed down from father to son, they will, in a few generations, become totally extinct, save where English names have not been substituted by public authority.

* See HECKWELDER on the Indian languages.

Although the subject is not an important one, yet, in a literary point of view, and as a matter of curiosity, the investigation of the names of American towns may not be entirely destitute of interest.

In New-England, the names of towns and counties are chiefly borrowed from Great Britain. It would seem that the puritan fathers were desirous of preserving some memento of the country from which religious persecution drove them, to seek an asylum among the wilds of America. Where there had been native settlements, the Indian names were for a while retained. Such was the case with Salem, Boston, and Providence. But the determination of the colonists was to eradicate every thing that perpetuated the native tribes, and the ancient names of Naumkeag, Shawmut, and Mooshasuck, gave place to those above-mentioned. Towns which received their names previous to the revolution, borrowed them from well known places in England. Those named after, were from the heroes and patriots who made themselves conspicuous during that contest. Worcester, Leicester, Gloucester, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Bristol, Warwick, Somerset, Cambridge, Chelsea, Newport, Northampton, etc., are of the former class, and among the latter, are Hancock, Adams, Warren, Greene, Washington, Franklin, etc. It was quite a fashion, in those primitive days, to prefix the word *new* to many of their towns, and although they have attained the age of two centuries, they still retain it. New-York will probably retain her name until she is as old as London is now, or perhaps until she has shared the fate of Rome and Carthage.

These names would do very well, did not every state in the Union resort to the same vocabulary; and in many instances several counties in the same state have selected the same name. This is not only bad taste, but it causes much perplexity, and obliges one to designate the particular county as well as state, in which the town is located. The state of Maine includes among her towns many named after the European states and cities, both ancient and modern. The names of the patriots of the revolution, Washington, Franklin, Hancock, Jefferson, Lee, Montgomery, Hamilton, and Adams, have been given to counties and towns in all of the New-England states. There is a Washington in each of them, and a Franklin in all, save one.

The great state of New-York — or the 'Empire State,' as it is called — seems to have ransacked the globe for appellations for her numerous towns. Every kingdom and empire has contributed its part. From the ancient kingdoms and states, she has borrowed Greece, Athens, Sparta, Troy, Jerusalem, Palmyra, Tyre, Utica, Corinth, Carthage, and Rome: Marathon and Macedon, also, have places among her towns. From the modern states, she has taken her Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Holland, Sardinia, Italy, Wales, China, Delhi, Peru, Chili, Mexico, etc., together with the following capitals: Stockholm, Petersburg, Copenhagen, Dresden, Berlin, Wilna, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Paris, Naples, Edinburgh, Lisbon, Madrid, Milan, Amsterdam, Turin, Geneva, Vienna, Florence, Antwerp, Warsaw, Batavia, Canton, Cairo, Lima, etc. Well may she be called the 'Empire State,' when the greatest kingdoms and empires, as well as their capitals, have places within her boundaries!

Not content with these, she has transplanted the names of their heroes, philosophers, law-givers and poets to her towns, and occasionally thrown in an Indian, French, and English name among them. The ancient names are, Homer, Hector, Lysander, Marcellus, Solon, Horace, Pompey, Brutus, Cato, Scipio, Hannibal, Romulus, Tully, Camillus, Manlius, Cincinnatus, Cicero, Seneca, Plato, Milo, Virgil, Fabius, Euclid, and Ovid! In scriptural names, she has an Eden, a Bethany, a Bethlehem, a Jericho, a Canaan, a Lebanon, a Hebron, and a Goshen!

Diana alone represents the ancient mythology — from which circumstance, one would suppose it to be meant for the Ephesian goddess of nature, denoting the nutritive power of the soil, as well as the mother of nations. The great men of England have contributed their part, and are as well represented as the learned of olden times. Scott, Byron, Milton, Dryden, Hume, and the unknown Junius, are each the appellations of her towns. All the revolutionary heroes, all the eminent statesmen, all the celebrated geniuses, and all the large land-speculators, have, with their names, added a link to the heterogeneous and conglomerated mass of counties, towns, and villages, which constitute the state of New-York.

The cities and towns in the middle and southern states are generally named from European places, or from the surnames of individuals, with the words, *town*, *field*, *boro'*, *ville*, etc., affixed to them. The names of distinguished Americans are common, as they should be, to all the states.

There is a county or town of *Washington* in every state and territory of the Union, except Delaware; and in the majority of them, there is both a county and a town of this name. The name of *Franklin* occurs twenty-one times, exclusive of numerous *Franklinvilles*, and *Franklintons*. *Jefferson*, *Madison*, and *Munroe*, including a few with the termination of *ville*, and *ton*, each occur from fifteen to twenty times. *Adams* nearly as many. *Jackson*, with the terminations, thirty-six times. *Hancock* and *Montgomery* are about as frequent as *Adams*. Distinguished generals appear to have the preference over philosophers and statesmen, in having their names given to towns. Twenty-five towns, some of which are places of considerable importance, bear the appellation of *Warren*; nineteen that of *Fayette* and *Fayetteville*; and the residence of the latter general, 'La Grange,' has been given to ten more. *Steuben*, *De Kalb*, *Pulaski*, *Knox*, *Lee*, *Macon*, *Jay*, *Pinckney*, and *Livingston*, have their places. *Columbia* is found in sixteen different states, exclusive of ten *Columbus's* and as many *Columbiana's* and *Columbiaville's*. *Fredonia*, *Freedom*, *Frechold*, *Freeman*, *Freeport*, *Frechetown*, and other names commencing with *Free*, occur twenty-two times.

Milton, England's favorite bard, has not been sufficiently immortalized by the country that gave him birth. Sixteen towns in the United States feel pride in bearing his name.

The capitals and principal cities of foreign countries seem to have been favorite names with the founders, or the persons by whom our towns were christened. *Athens*, with which so many interesting events are associated, occurs eleven times; *Berlin*, eight; *Canton*, eleven; *Dover*, ten; *Dublin*, six; *Paris*, nine; *Troy*, eleven, and *Salem*, sixteen times.

The name of *Union*, including its terminations, is found to occur thirty-nine times; but as these notes were made a year ago, since when the mania for building towns and cities in the West has raged to an alarming extent, it would not be unreasonable to add some half dozen more *Unions* to the list. As it is, several states must contain two towns of the same name.

Liberty, so closely connected with *Union*, appears not to have been as attractive as the latter, ten towns only bearing the name, and *Independence* still less so, as it occurs but six times.

The name of the brave and lamented *Perry* has not been forgotten; nor would it be, if alone confined to him. Twenty-one towns now bear his name. *Clinton* is deservedly another favorite with his countrymen. His great work in the state of New-York has immortalized his name. Fourteen towns of the name are known in the country. *Centreville* is found seventeen times; *Springfield*, sixteen; *Richmond*, sixteen; *Brownsville*, fourteen; *Fairfield*, fourteen; *Concord*, twelve; *Manchester*, sixteen; *Kingston*, twelve; *Middleborough*, *Middlebrook*, *Middlebury*, *Middlefield*, *Middleford*, *Middleport*, *Middlesex*, *Middletown*, *Middleville*, and *Middleway*, collectively, occur fifty times.

Native animals have contributed their part in furnishing appellations for our towns, as *Elkhill*, *Elkhart*, *Elkhorn*, *Elkland*, *Elklick*, *Elkmarsh*, *Elkridge*, *Elkrun*, *Elkcreek*, *Elkgrove*, *Elkton*, and *Elkville*. Twenty-three places have names derived from *Buck*, nine *Buffaloes*, six *Bulls*, ten *Beavers*, including those with *dam*, *kill*, *creek*, *valley*, etc., affixed: *Raccoon*, *Wolf*, *Swan*, *Sunfish*, *Eagle*, *Doe-Run*, *Crab-Run*, *Butterfly*, and other choice selections from animated nature, may be found.

Our noble forest trees have generously lent their names, and constitute no inconsiderable part of the innumerable array we have attempted to describe. The oak, in particular, is prolific with its appendages, occurring thirty-six times, in the following names: *Oakdale*, *Oakhill*, *Oakgrove*, *Oakham*, *Oakflat*, *Oakfield*, *Oakland*, *Oakorchard*, and *Oakville*. There are also places named after the *Cedar*, *Chestnut*, *Hickory*, *Locust*, *Maple*, *Mulberry*, *Cherry*, *Pine*, *Hazle*, *Poplar*, *Elm*, *Laurel*, *Butternut*, *Sycamore*, *Walnut*, and *Willow* trees, with and without terminations.

The name of *Greene* has contributed largely in furnishing appellations for our towns, both singly and with its numerous terminations. It occurs no less than eighty-five times, in *Greenfield*, *Greenford*, *Greenhill*, *Greenville*, *Greenock*, *Greenbush*, *Greenport*, *Greenriver*, *Greenboro'*, *Greenbury*, *Greenfork*, *Greenstone*, *Greenvalley*, *Greenwich*, *Greenwood*, *Greenmont*, *Greenland*, *Greenbay*, and *Greenbank*.

The name of *Smith*, as in *Smithfield*, *Smithford*, *Smithdale*, and with similar terminations to the name previously mentioned, occurs twenty-six times. *Sandwich*, *Sandhill*, *Sandplains*, *Sandbluff*, and names commencing with *sand*, are found forty times. *Pleasant*, with *Pleasant Valley*, *hill*, *mount*, *ridge*, *plain*, *vale*, *view*, and *ville*, occurs forty-three times. *Williams*, with its terminations, thirty-five times. *Fairhaven*, *Fairplay*, *Fairport*, *Fairtown*, *Fairview*, *Fairgrove*, *Fairmont*, eighteen times. *Brown*, with the common terminations, thirty-nine times. *Wood*, with the usual terminations of

land, lawn, bury, etc., and the unusual names of *Woodpecker* and *Woodcock*, forty-four times. *Belleville, Bellefonte, Bellevue*, etc., twenty-eight times. *White*, with the terminations of *creek, deer, field, hall, haven, lake, house, land, ville, town, river*, and *White Horse, White Eyes, White Pigeon, White Post*, etc., occurs fifty times. *Bloomington, Bloomfield*, and words beginning with *Bloom*, twenty-two times. *Clarksville, Clarksboro', Clarkson*, twenty-nine times.

Towns and villages situated on hills or mountains are frequently named after celebrated mountains, but this class of names are equally used to designate places situated on plains. They seem to have been favorite names with those whose privilege it was to apply them. One hundred and twenty-six towns are found in the United States with names commencing with *Mount*. *Mount Vernon* occurs sixteen times. As specimens of others, may be selected *Mount Zion, Mount Pleasant, Mount Olympus, Mount Hope, Mount Jackson, Mount Washington, Tabor, Pizgah, Carmel, Gilead, Horeb, Lebanon, Israel*, etc.

The most prolific source, however, of American names, is that of old and foreign names, prefixed by the word *New* — as *New-London* and *New-York*. Of towns with this class of names, there are two hundred and fifty-seven. The following are examples of them: *Newark, Newport, Newton, Newcastle, Newcomb, Newbury, Newburg, New-Haven*: also, *New Egypt, New Paris, New Troy, New Jerusalem, New Sweden, New Britain, New Canaan*, etc. The latter few — which are but specimens of about two hundred — are certainly in very bad taste, and exhibit a want of information on the part of those by whom they were named.

The attempt to *Grecianize* modern names, has not been attended with success, and is the most ridiculous method yet resorted to. *Jacksonopolis, Perryopolis*, and a few others, are all that exist.

There is another variety of names which, for their singularity, should not be omitted in this list. Many may doubt their existence: all we know is, that there are places of these names, and that they are of sufficient importance to contain a Post Office. The same remark will apply to every place here mentioned. To designate the states where the following towns or villages are situated, would be useless; it is sufficient to say that they may be found. They are: *Horse-shoe, Split-Rock, Horse-head, Hat, Long-a-coming, One-Leg, Painted Post, Spread-Eagle, Thoroughfare, Traveler's-Rest, Wild-Cat, English Neighbor, Good Intent, Good-Luck, White-Horse, Half-Moon, Temperance, Economy, Harmony, Industry, Trinity, and Unity*.

The most singular thing connected with the subject, is, that our country itself is destitute of a name, and our countrymen cannot assume to themselves the distinctive appellation which the natives of all other countries in the world are enabled to. Our country is called the *United States* — but there are the *United States of Mexico*, the *South American States*, and, in Europe, the *German and Italian States*. All of these, save the former, have a name — for we can say *Mexico, Columbia, Guatemala, Germany, Italy*, etc.; but by what name shall we call the *United States of North America*? What its natives? It is true, they are generally called *Americans*, but this is coming no nearer the mark, than to call an Irishman a *Eu-*

ropean: for persons born in Canada, Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, or Peru, are equally entitled to the name of American — in addition to which, they have a distinctive appellation, which designates the country of their birth.

Natives of this country, when in foreign parts, are only known as Americans, or natives of the United States of North America. It is true they are sometimes called Yankees, but this is a nickname, which only belongs to the people of New-England — a name given them by the aborigines. A few of the states are so named that their inhabitants may be designated — as a Virginian, a Vermonter, a Kentuckian, etc. Others it would be extremely difficult so to classify; but nicknames have been invented as a substitute. For instance, natives of New-England are called Yankees, those of Ohio, Buckeyes, etc.

In addition to the several varieties of names mentioned, there is another class which is deserving of notice. It originated from an intermixture between the French and Indian, and subsequently becoming Anglicized, is very difficult to analyze. In the north-western parts of our country, and on the northern frontier, where colonies were first planted by the French, these names are found. They spelt the Indian names according to the value of their own alphabet, and to accord with their pronunciation, which did very well while they employed them; but when the Americans used the French words, with an English pronunciation, the Indian names were of course metamorphosed into words which neither people would acknowledge as belonging to their language.

In this class of names, may be included those of Dutch origin in the states of New-York and New-Jersey. Many, it is true, retain their original pronunciation; but to these we do not refer. Our remarks only apply to those which, from their similarity to English names, have become so by use.

Indian names, so frequently referred to in these remarks, we have purposely avoided mentioning, as they compose a class which requires a close analysis, and which is of sufficient importance to form the subject of another paper.

A. B. C.

WOMAN: AN EXTRACT.

THERE is a bud in life's dark wilderness,
Whose beauties charm, whose fragrance soothes distress;
There is a beam in life's o'erclouded sky,
That gilds the starting tear it cannot dry;
That flower, that lovely bloomed in Eden's grove,
Shed the full sweets and heavenly light of love.
Still, lovely Woman! still thy winning smile
That caused our cares, can every care beguile:
And thy soft hand, amid the maze of ill,
Can rear one blissful bower of Eden still.
Thy warm and generous faith, thy patience meek,
That plants a smile where pain despoils the cheek,
These shall remain, when sorrow's self is dead,
When sex decays, and passion's self is fled.

T.